

Ox Close Primary School Newsletter



September 4th 2020 Volume 1

Ox Close Re-united

First of all, I would like to welcome everyone back to school full time after what has been the most incredible period due to COVID-19. It has been an absolute joy and pleasure to see the children and staff all back in at the same time. I will never forget Wednesday morning when the gates opened and the children came through onto site. After such an anxious period for everyone, it was really quite emotional. Year 1 and 2 children, for example, were cheering, skipping and running as they came through the gates, so delighted to be re-united with their friends and the Ox Close community. I have loved seeing the children around in school and hearing all about their adventures.

Amazing Start

There has been a very happy and calm atmosphere around the school this week and this is thanks to the children, staff and parents. The amount of Risk Assessment and logistical planning that Miss Bowden and I have had to carry out has been mind boggling but we have been pleased to see our hard work and careful thought paying off in practice. Phasing starts and finishes is complicated but it has worked out well at this point, allowing the children to enter and leave safely and avoiding large groups of parents being outside the site at one time. Play times are phased and a one way system is in place for accessing the yard. Getting the children from the gate or yard to the classroom also involves hand sanitising before entry, which potentially might create queues, so again this has to be done to the letter and to the minute.

Lunchtimes

Lunches are on a totally different level in terms of logistical complexity. Only one bubble can be in the hall at one time and the hall can not be used as a thoroughfare, which it usually is. We have had to adjust and adapt timings as under no circumstances can we mix bubbles in the hall but we are managing to get through the meals, despite untimely problems with several appliances this week too. Thank you to Karen and the kitchen staff for their hard work. As with everything, we will continually review our lunchtime provision and will adapt to the situation as it evolves.

Ox Close Staff

We are lucky to have such a wonderful, child centred team of staff at Ox Close. Miss Bowden has been a tower of strength throughout the COVID crisis and she is such an important part of everything that we do. I must thank every single member of staff for their incredible efforts this week though. We are all human and naturally there will have been a degree of anxiety about the full return, even though most staff had been able to be in school before the summer holidays. An important part of our job has been to offer them support, effective organisation and reassurance and I must say that they have stepped up magnificently. I have said that we must focus upon the immediate and not think too far ahead. Well done everyone!

Congratulations to Mrs Phillips and Mrs Franklin

This week has seen Mrs Phillips and Mrs Franklin reach an incredible landmark. On the 1st September, they had both been at Ox Close for 20 years. Over that period of time, the world of education has changed beyond recognition but both have been true stalwarts of what is an amazing school. I would like to pay tribute to them both for their amazing service.

Planning Ahead

We have an extensive School Improvement Plan and have plans in place to work in bubbles and to minimise risk as far as we can. It is inevitable that the country will face further challenges with COVID. Our learning offer throughout lockdown and the summer was extensive and we are improving it further for when children are absent or for if there are further national or local lockdowns. I would like a significant level of digital interaction via Teams and or Zoom should this occur and we have measures in place. In terms of school events, we cannot possibly hold Harvest or Christmas performances as we have done in the past under current circumstances. Parents Evenings will also be held virtually. In the summer, we had some creative approaches to addressing problems and we will keep you posted with plans and developments.

Reading Books

Please could you send all school reading books back in on Monday so that we can start to restock our library shelves – they are looking very empty due to all the books we sent home at the beginning of lockdown. Once we have all the books back, we will begin to send books home again. Please be rest assured that we will be following all guidance on this which will include quarantining the books for a short period before returning them to book shelves.

Newsletters

Just a reminder, that as well as sending out paper copies, we always save our newsletters online in case you ever lose the newsletter and need to refer to it. You can find newsletters at <http://www.ox-close.durham.sch.uk/parents/school-newsletters/>

Attendance

Attendance this week has been very encouraging and much higher than the reported national figures. We are doing our utmost to keep the children as safe as possible while continuing fully with their education and hopefully parents are reassured by this.

Dates for the Diary

Friday 23 rd October 2020	School closes for half term
October Half Term	
Monday 2 nd November 2020	Children back to school
Wednesday 18 th November 2020	Flu Vaccination Day
Monday 23 rd , Tuesday 24 th and Wednesday 25 th November 2020	Parent Consultation Evenings – these will be held virtually and more information will follow.
Monday 30th November 2020	PD Day – School Closed
Friday 18 th December 2020	School closes for Christmas holidays
Christmas Holidays	
Monday 4th January 2021	PD Day – School Closed
Tuesday 5 th January 2021	Children back to school

A Bowden

Miss A Bowden
Head of School

D Harrison

Mr D Harrison
Executive Headteacher